

Safety and Health Fire Tech Tips

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Be Seen: High-Visibility Outer Garment Required When Working in Highway Rights-of-Way

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A new rule generally requires Forest Service personnel working in the right-of-way of federally funded highways to wear a high-visibility outer garment meeting the requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004, Class 2 standard.

Employees changing a tire (figure 1) or directing traffic in the highway right-of-way should be wearing a vest, jacket, or coverall that meets the standard.



Figure 1— Forest Service employees need to wear a high-visibility vest when working in the right-of-way of interstates or U.S. highways.

The new rule took effect late in 2008 with revisions to 23 CFR, Part 634 (Worker Visibility). The rule, which has limited exemptions for law enforcement personnel and firefighters, applies to all “workers” in the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway who are exposed either to traffic or to construction equipment.

“Workers” are defined as people on foot whose duties place them within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway (interstates and U.S. highways). This definition would include highway construction and maintenance crews, survey crews, utility crews, persons responding to incidents in the highway right-of-way, and law enforcement personnel when they are directing traffic, investigating crashes, and handling lane closures, obstructed roadways, and disasters.

Longstanding provisions of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) also address the need for workers to be seen by vehicle operators, but those provisions are recommendations rather than requirements. A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) proposal would incorporate the new rule into the MUTCD. This proposal would make high-visibility garments mandatory for anyone working on all roads open to public travel in accordance with 23 CFR, Part 655, not just Federal-aid highways.

Law enforcement personnel performing duties where visibility is not desired are exempt from the new rule.

There are exceptions to this rule for wildland firefighters. Further information is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/equipment/>.



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The ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 Standard

Class 2 garments are for persons who work near roadways where traffic flows faster than 25 miles per hour and who need to be more visible during inclement weather. Class 3 garments are for persons who work near roadways where traffic flows faster than 50 miles per hour. The FHWA has determined that Class 2 garments meet the intent of 23 CFR, Part 634.

The ANSI/ISEA 107-2004, Class 2 standard requires a minimum of 775 square inches of highly visible colored fluorescent materials and 201 square inches of retroreflective material (figure 2). The ANSI/ISEA 107-2004, Class 3 standard requires a minimum of 1,240 square inches of highly visible colored fluorescent material and 310 square inches of retroreflective material. All garments that meet the requirements of the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard are clearly labeled to indicate compliance.



Figure 2— This high-visibility vest meets the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard for Class 2 garments.

Availability

Garments that comply with the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard are clearly labeled. No specific color is required, so any garment labeled as compliant meets the letter of the law. Some colors may be more visible than others in different environments. Select a color you judge to be best where you work. Safety vests that comply with the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard are available from safety equipment stores and from GSA Advantage (<http://www.gsaadvantage.gov>). When searching for high-visibility garments at GSA Advantage, include “ANSI” in your query to make sure the garment complies with the new rule.

Buy only garments that are labeled as complying with Class 2 or Class 3 of the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard.

Conclusions

Every Forest Service vehicle should carry at least two vests that comply with the ANSI/ISEA 107-2004 standard. Employees who need to fix a flat tire or work in the highway right-of-way should wear a vest when doing so. The vests should be stored in a sealed container of some sort to keep them clean and bright.



For additional information about high-visibility outer garments, contact Dennis Davis at MTDC:

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Electronic copies of MTDC’s documents are available on the Internet at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/t-d.php>



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